

REMARKS

Receipt of the Office Action mailed December 7, 2010 is hereby acknowledged. Applicants acknowledge withdrawal of the rejections over Madsen in view of Hunter, and Madsen in view of Hunter and further in view of Larsen. Reconsideration of the outstanding rejections in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Amendments

Applicants have amended each of the independent claims (claims 11, 20, 22, and 30) to recite that the evaporation step takes place at a temperature of 25°-100°C. New claims 31-34 recite that the evaporation step takes place at a temperature of from 70°-100°C. These amendments and claims are supported in the specification at page 14, lines 15-26.

Claims 11, 20, and 30 have been amended to more particularly point out that the curing step in the claimed processes is carried out by irradiation. This amendment is supported generally throughout the specification, for example at page 14, lines 29-30, and obviates the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

No new matter has been added.

Obviousness Rejections

The Examiner has rejected claims 11-13, 15-24, and 26-31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Howard, WO 89/09246 ("Howard") in view of Hunter, et al., U.S. Patent Publication No. 2004/0043052 ("Hunter"). The Examiner has also rejected claims 14 and 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Howard in view of Hunter and further in view of Larsen, et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,484,565 ("Larsen").

According to the Examiner, Howard teaches solid structures having a surface coated with a cross-linked hydrophilic polymer and a process for preparing such structures. The Examiner states that the difference between Howard and the presently claimed method is that Howard fails to teach the use of a plasticizer in the polymer solution, but that Hunter teaches the use of such a plasticizer. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Howard fails to teach an evaporation step that takes place at a temperature from 25°-100°C. Instead, Howard specifically teaches that the evaporation step is done at room temperature (i.e. without heating), specifically distinguishing

between the air drying step and a subsequent curing step (which involves heating). Nothing in Howard or either of the secondary references teaches or suggests that the evaporation step should take place at a temperature of 25°-100°C.

Moreover, as noted by the Examiner, Howard fails to teach the use of a plasticizer in the polymer solution which is applied to the polymer substrate. The Examiner has asserted that a person of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to use the plasticizer of Hunter in Howard's process because Hunter teaches that the plasticizer increases the flexibility of the coating. However, Howard's coating is not described as needing to be more flexible; thus, a person of skill in the art reading Howard would have had no reason to use Hunter's plasticizer in Howard's process. Only hindsight reconstruction based on knowledge of Applicants' invention suggests the combination of the references in the manner required by the rejection. In addition, nothing in Hunter teaches or suggests that its plasticizer would provide the properties to the coatings which are actually observed in coatings prepared using the presently claimed methods, namely high abrasion resistance and a low friction coefficient when wet.

With respect to the rejections of dependent claims 14 and 25, the third reference - Larsen - fails to cure the deficiencies of Howard and Hunter outlined above.

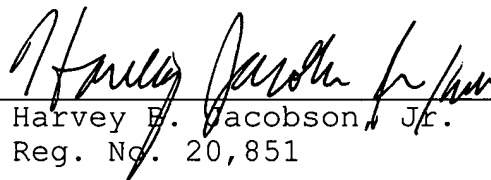
In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the obviousness rejections.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that the claims are now in condition for allowance. Prompt notice to that effect is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes a telephone call would advance prosecution of the application, he is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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